

The Nation

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EDITORIAL

LISTENING TO DISSENT

The Senate's October 2 vote to override President Reagan's veto and impose economic sanctions on South Africa telegraphs a message to the regime in Pretoria that Americans do not support the Administration's failed policy of constructive engagement. In the long run, however, the sanctions may have more impact on the domestic political agenda than on South Africa's economy.

Although they go further than the European Community's measures, the sanctions are considerably weaker than those passed by the House last summer. They limit trade with South Africa but only by about 18 percent, and they stop short of requiring divestment by U.S. corporations operating there.

Ironically, the new legislation may undermine the state and local divestment efforts, which, to date, have led nineteen states, seventy cities, thirteen counties and the Virgin Islands to pass sanctions legislation, involving approximately \$20.6 billion in investments.

During the floor debate on the sanctions bill, Richard Lugar, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, asserted that the legislation would pre-empt state and local measures, thereby supporting Administration efforts to supersede significant local antiapartheid laws. House leaders disagreed and the matter will ultimately have to be decided in the courts.

Such attempts to subvert the coalition that has led the successful fight against apartheid reflect apprehension among conservative members of Congress, who fear the joining together of churches, unions, pension-fund managers and municipal councils to oppose Administration policy. Suppose, for example, we built such coalitions of citizen protest against the U.S. war on Nicaragua and the nuclear arms race—and Congress listened.

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POP FRONT CULTURE

I DREAMED I SAW MTV LAST NIGHT

JESSE LEMISCH

My friend, a fellow red diaper baby, has modified his politics, but he is still locked into the Popular Front culture that we grew up with: Pete Seeger, songs of the Spanish Civil War and some New Left versions of the same thing. He gave up trying to get me to Pete Seeger concerts. I had bad reactions, somewhat surprisingly, since, in my heart, I like Seeger. Sullenly, I mumbled things like "blue overalls," "disingenuous," "archaic aesthetic" and "dead end for the left." So my friend gave up on me. Then one day he called to ask me to go to a Si Kahn concert with him. Kahn, he told me, is a rabbi's son who came out of the New Left and has played an honorable role in labor, civil rights and community organizing for twenty years, and who sings in new ways about new causes.

My friend's instinct proved unerring: it was Pete Seeger all over again, but offensive in ways that Seeger is not. Kahn makes a much longer leap than does Seeger into a culture and voice that are not his own. His singing raises some important general questions about left thought and culture, concerning authenticity, class, the relation between the left and the rest of America, and a variety of issues at the intersection of aesthetics and politics. Some of the same questions are raised by the documentary films *Seeing Red*, *The Good Fight* and *Union Maids*.

One of the chief problems in left expression centers on the question of authenticity. Can people on the left speak honestly in their various voices, or must they pretend to be somebody else and speak in a voice that they imagine, erroneously, to be mainstream American? For

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LETTERS.

CAN'T BUY ME LOVE

Bristol, Tenn.

The left needs to speak out with moral authority if it is to defeat what Carole S. Vance describes as the "heavy assault from the right" ["The Meese Commission on the Road," Aug. 2/9]. But Vance has no quarrel with pornography.

She ridicules the right's lumping together of the purported progeny of porn—"divorce, premarital sex, sexual 'deviation' and family destruction"—and pokes fun at the commission's wrangling over some nonproblems, but she is silent about the deadly problem of family destruction. She barely mentions child pornography and ignores suggestive evidence linking pornography to the sexual abuse of children.

My perspective is that of the Christian left. The religious right, with its grotesque simplifications and pharisaism, terrifies me. I blame its adherents in part for the fission of the nuclear family—the exploding numbers of street children, teen prostitutes and addicts—because in their own pompous, puritanical, counterproductive way they abet the culture of sex-object sex and loveless relationships.

I basically oppose censorship; "not by might nor by power but by my spirit, says the Lord" (Zech. 4:6). I am for sex that's loving and joyous, and I believe the Bible recognizes situation ethics, which leads to sexual liberation. God knows difficult choices have to be made and adhered to. Importantly, "Satan" means "accuser" in Hebrew, but "paraclete" means "defense attorney" in Greek ("Comforter" in the King James Bible). Jesus warned about the stingy, fault-finding eye (Matt. 6:23, 7:3, 20:15) and praised the "generous eye," which sees the good in others and fills one's whole body with light (Matt. 6:22).

Thus, although space prohibits a discussion of the relevant passages, I regard it as quite possible that David and Jonathan experienced homosexual love. They loved and needed each other very much. But I can't see any situation warranting the use of sexual images as a surrogate for sex. Even for the purposes of sexual fantasy, porn is unnecessary: everybody has an imagination.

Sex-object sex is a betrayal of a great gift from God. And porn is always sex-object sex—dehumanized and loveless, if not joyless or compulsive. Matthew 5:28, properly translated, condemns not the act of looking with lust but the act of looking in order to lust, treating another as a mere sex object. Then one has already sinned in one's heart, before one feels any lust. Nothing in the Bible says feeling lust is sinful. The evil is "haughtiness of eyes" (Prov. 21:4).

For many people the use of pornography leads to an impaired ability to relate to others, and for a few people it leads to

violence. As a "surrogate" for sex (Vance's term), porn may seem to the heavy, dependent user to be a depiction of the way things should be. Art is a commentary on life, and sexual images are commentaries on sex. So porn may be taken as a statement on the way we all should be—constantly in heat.

The potential for violence arises because there's no vulnerability in porn use. Love is intimately connected with the vulnerability involved in reaching out to another. That porn use is a way to eschew vulnerability is demonstrated by the script of every porn movie: the woman always makes the advance, however improbable; the man never has to. So a porn-dependent man might start thinking it is a woman's duty to make all the moves. That belief can lead to hatred and violence.

Even if the porn-using man does not believe women must make all the moves, he still may have big problems in making any moves himself. I grew up with porn as a teen-ager, finding it readily accessible and affordable; it was a big part of my sex life. I was painfully shy. Very fearful of rejection, I got hurt all the time. I made some girlfriends suffer, and I suffered terribly. The result was severe mental illness, which fortunately precipitated character growth. Thus, I see porn leading to loneliness and/or unhappy relationships—indirect sources of violence.

Vance stresses the lack of statistically significant correlations implicating porn in violence. Sexual excitement is subjective, existential, unquantifiable. Strength of libido varies from individual to individual; access to porn varies; one man's art is another man's porn. So the mere frequency of reported porn use is but a poor proxy for intensity of porn use and emotional dependence thereupon. Social scientists armed with number-crunching software can't prove or disprove a link between porn and violence.

Mark B. Peterson

VANCE REPLIES

New York City

I don't think that the left—secular or Christian—should bother "to speak out with moral authority" against the conservative agenda, unless it is willing to provide an alternative view of sexuality and gender. Despite Mark B. Peterson's belief that his approach differs from that of the Christian right, his letter displays most of the rhetorical and ideological strategies common to conservative narratives, including:

§ casting recent social changes—in this case, changes in gender and the family—in strictly negative terms ("the deadly problem of family destruction") and then attributing those changes to pornography;

§ attempting to support his position through liberal use of Biblical quotations;

§ testifying to the negative effects of pornography by presenting fairly implausible evidence—in this case, the use of pornography as a teen-ager resulting in "severe mental illness."

The heart of the conservative view is this: sexuality must continue to be defined by reproduction; thus, it requires marriage and procreation. Sexuality per se is illegitimate and redeemed only when placed in a very particular social context. Sexual acts and practices falling outside this narrow range should be suppressed by the state, since they lead to societal and individual ruin.

Granted, Peterson is a tad more liberal. He does not support state intervention and censorship, and he allows that "homosexual love" might be "possible," that is, legitimate under certain conditions. For that we should be grateful.

But his critique of "sex-object sex" is a restatement of the conservative view: sex unredeemed by marriage, or here, by deep commitment and love, is dangerous and bad, as well as "dehumanized and loveless—if not joyless or compulsive." The sexual act in question is masturbation.

It fascinates me that those who condemn pornography and its harms never use the term "masturbation," though that is what they are condemning. There is a good reason: condemning masturbation in this day and age—outside of right-wing circles—is unpersuasive, even ridiculous. Most people do not believe that masturbation leads to dependency or impaired ability to relate to others, or indeed that it is incompatible with or antithetical to intimate and meaningful connections with other human beings.

Just as the Meese commission tried to modernize the arguments in favor of restricting sexually explicit materials and thus make them more appealing, Peterson restates traditional arguments against masturbation in a new vocabulary that draws on quasi-feminism ("sex-object") and a seemingly progressive interest in human relations. But the bottom line—masturbation is harmful and destructive—is no more persuasive than the bottom line of the Meese commission when stated in a candid and explicit form.

If we were honest, we would admit that there is much we don't know about sexuality as well as about pornography. To detach sexuality from reproduction and the limited confines in which it has been expressed is to admit a wide range of possibility, which many people are now exploring in diverse ways. Expanded sexual possibilities, like other social changes, inspire fear and anxiety—some quite justified—but also hope. Amid this flux, a truly "generous eye" would be interested in evaluating these possibilities on their own ground, rather than determinedly fixing its gaze on the still dominant but no longer exclusive way of arranging sexuality.

Carole S. Vance

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EDITORIALS.

The Disinformers

On August 25 a front-page story in *The Wall Street Journal* announced that the United States and Libya were on a "collision course," that further outrages on the part of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi were in the works and that the Pentagon stood ready to "rubble-ize" key Libyan targets. What should have been striking even then was the extraordinary domino effect the story caused in the press in the days that followed. Was the story true? "Authoritative," declared White House Press Secretary Larry Speakes. And that interruption of the lethargy of a Santa Barbara August was enough to convince *The Journal's* competitors and the television networks to run with the story.

Five weeks later, on October 2, came the great Poindexter memo flap. *The Washington Post* reported on its front page

that the *Journal* story and those that followed were based largely on false information, generated as part of a plan to keep Colonel Qaddafi from sleeping at night. With the leak of that news, presumably by a dissenting aide to national security adviser Adm. John Poindexter, editors rushed to their VDT screens.

Their reactions came in three varieties. There were the self-serving professional laurels to *The Post* for blowing the whistle and upholding the principles of adversarial reporting, even though back in August the paper reported the false information as fact. Then there were the tight-lipped warnings of future skepticism: Washington had better be careful; we won't trust them next time. And, loudest of all, there was the wounded cry, How can they lie to us?—the outraged innocence that is peculiar to the American press. Abe Rosen-
thal of *The New York Times*, who declared he felt "rather ill" at the idea of the Administration lying to journalists, climbed the loftiest moral pedestal to rail against deception.

OCT 18 1986

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Johnson City, Tennessee

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Only Jack Nelson, the Washington bureau chief of the *Los Angeles Times*, showed any sophistication. "It's just another indication of the contempt they have for the press," Nelson reflected. "They'll manipulate or lie or use disinformation to get their story across." But why was Nelson's such a lone voice? Unasked is the question of how the press, even allowing for the silly season, fell for such a whopper in the first place. It does not even seem strange to most Americans that when national security is invoked, the press drops the standards of traditional journalism, let alone investigative reporting, to lap up any assertion of the Defense Department or the White House.

There are two things going on here, both of which should be readily detectable to anyone with a minimal knowledge of history and a functioning pair of nostrils. One is a long-established tradition of deception and falsehood in the way postwar Presidents have treated the press, especially in matters of foreign policy. The second, more recent, is the expansion of that practice by the Reagan Administration. Journalism 101 is, no doubt, full of examples of stories related to national security that have been made out of whole cloth. There was the C.I.A.'s effort in 1970 to discredit Chilean President Salvador Allende in the month of his election by feeding a story to *Time* that he planned to use terror to shut down the opposition press. There was the agency's campaign to smear Elias Demetracopoulos, a persistent critic of the Greek colonels, who was deemed to be harming "good Greek-American relations." There were its attempts to discredit critics of the Warren commission report on the assassination of President Kennedy. These instances and others were revealed by Morton Halperin, then director of the Center for National Security Studies, during Congressional hearings on the C.I.A. and the media back in the winter of 1977-78. But that was nine years ago, and nine years is a long time in the American historical memory.

Another overlapping category of disinformation should also be familiar by now to any reader. That is the creation of pretexts for action against an external enemy, with the latest Libya flap as a case in point. The paradigm is probably the North Vietnamese attack on those U.S. ships in the Gulf of Tonkin.

European reporters who were in Managua still recall the evening of the U.S. elections in November 1984 with wonderment. That was the night a cloud of dust suddenly arose outside the Hotel Intercontinental, as their U.S. colleagues headed off like a pack of wolves to the seaport of Corinto to check out MIG-21 fighters being unloaded in crates from the Soviet freighter Bakuriani—or at least the Administration said they were being unloaded. Do editors of the

outraged-innocence school now consider that episode to have been an exercise in disinformation?

In search of additional examples, one need go no further than Libya itself. What about that flurry of stories in November 1981 that Libyan hit men were roaming the streets of Washington? The likelihood is that both the Nicaraguan and the Libyan episodes have by now been consigned to oblivion.

Governments have always urged the press to "get on the team" in wartime, but as Bernard Kalb's resignation as the State Department spokesman dramatically highlights, the Reagan Administration has vastly expanded the definition of what constitutes a state of war. The Reagan Administration thinks we are at war with a whole range of Third World countries, so it should be no surprise when it imposes wartime restrictions on information. For George Shultz, the conflict with Colonel Qaddafi is analogous to World War II, which allows him to quote Churchill: "In time of war, the truth is so precious, it must be attended by a bodyguard of lies."

The bodyguard will surely be out in force in the aftermath of Nicaragua's downing of a C-123 transport plane shipping arms to the *contras*' southern front. With a survivor—whether a C.I.A. operative or a mercenary—in Nicaraguan custody for journalists to interview, some basic questions will probably be raised: Was this the last of retired Gen. John Singlaub's private mercy missions? The first installment of Congress's \$100 million? Or a freelance adventure by one of the outfits that inhabits *Soldier of Fortune's* advertising pages?

In a sense, the distinction is academic. After the Poindexter affair, official denials may seem less plausible than usual, but the deck is still stacked heavily against the exposure of what really happened. The lead headline is still more likely to be "Officials Deny" than "Nicaragua Proves." The dateline remains Washington, not Managua. And column one remains the preserve of official bombast, lies and red herrings. We read that Elliott Abrams sees Eugene Hasenfus and his cohorts as "heroes" and that George Shultz disclaims "any connection" before we can turn to the inside pages for some facts.

The danger for anyone who tries to make sense of the current furor over disinformation rests in separating the smoking gun of a demonstrable conspiracy—symbolized this time by the Poindexter memo—from the broader pattern of how this Administration views war, peace and truth. There is no aberration in this most recent instance. For years Administration officials have been telling anyone who will listen that it has a new conception of global conflict and that one of the chief ways of fighting it is through "psychological operations" such as spreading disinformation, even on the home front.

When they are caught, their response is predictable: unleash the F.B.I. on those internal dissenters who have the audacity to leak. And for dissenters outside the government, including those editors who vow to be skeptical next time around, could there be any clearer message than the sign on Larry Speakes's desk? It reads, "You don't tell us how to stage the news, and we don't tell you how to cover it."

FALL BOOKS ISSUE

NOVEMBER 1

(on sale October 25)

A Woman's Place?

Nancy Smith of Waterbury, Vermont, told a Labor Department review panel that she enjoys knitting ski caps at home for a commercial manufacturer. "I can make my own working hours, work at my own speed and most of all, [be] home when my family needs me," she explained. Senator Orrin Hatch agrees. His Freedom of the Workplace bill, introduced in Congress last year and still under consideration, would end the ban on commercial work in the home. Hatch calls it a defense of "the rights of women." Likewise, in a July 30 editorial *The New York Times* endorsed the lifting of restrictions on home work, saying it "would make working easier for people who care for children." But will women benefit from the proposed deregulation of industrial home work?

The effort to deregulate home work in six garment-related industries (knitted outerwear was deregulated in 1984) and to expand it in telecommunications and clerical work goes against assumptions central to modern labor relations—that labor-standards legislation is necessary and that home labor is intrinsically exploitative. It turns its back on a century of controversy. Beginning in the 1880s, reformers fought to regulate the home finishing of garments and soldering of jewelry, as part of a broader quest to set labor standards for all workers and to secure protective legislation for women. Such standards would maintain the "family wage," an income large enough for a man to support his wife and children, and would also protect actual or potential mothers by improving working conditions for the "weaker sex." The factory was no place for mothers, went the argument, a point dramatized by a National Women's Trade Union League postcard from the 1910s showing a haggard woman nursing an infant while running her foot-powered sewing machine, mockingly titled: "Sacred Motherhood." Home work—involving long hours, small wages and child labor—particularly degraded the home, motherhood and childhood. With union allies in the clothing trades, early twentieth-century reformers such as Florence Kelley of the National Consumers' League struggled to save the home from the factory.

During the New Deal era, women in the Labor Department sought an outright ban on home work because, as the Women's Bureau declared, it "commercialized" the home, undermining the "normal demands of home and children upon the housewife and mother." After the passage of the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, they won prohibitions on home work in seven garment-related trades, where such labor was most prevalent and violations of minimum-wage and maximum-hour provisions were most flagrant. The history of state labor-law enforcement and Federal action, particularly under the National Recovery Administration, had proved that home work could not be regulated: not only would employers and employees falsify records, but many would never apply for certification in the first place—problems that persist despite a compliance program set in motion last year by the Labor Department.

Like their predecessors in the 1930s, trade unions and

government opponents of home work decry its corrosive effect on wage standards, but they also defend women's rights on the job, and to a job. Their critique is an advance from earlier notions of "sacred motherhood." Yet it retains the separation between home and work, keeping the home as a private realm, free from industrial work but not from women's unpaid labor: the cleaning, cooking and caring that both neoclassical economists and radical feminists agree place women at a disadvantage in the labor market. In contrast "pro-family" conservatives recognize the interaction between home and market. Support for home work is on their agenda, alongside opposition to government regulation of industry, union power and the welfare state. Proponents of home work continue to cite its advantages for women who must work and care for their children. In the 1980s, however, they speak in the language of rights, charging that prohibitions against home work discriminate on the basis of sex, even as they defend the traditional family.

"Right to work" has become "a woman's right," extended to the home, where women will now be free to type or sew after washing clothes and watching children. They will not have to fight traffic, buy office clothes or a second car, or further reduce their pink-collar paychecks by paying for child care. Instead, they will limit their career prospects, pensions and other benefits, and they will be free to experience a domestic "stretchout," as the work they do for wages moves into the home. But the conditions that make home work the best of a set of bad options will remain: women's nearly exclusive responsibility for the care of children, the elderly and the ill; a labor market divided along gender lines, in which women earn about 60 cents to every dollar earned by men; and the undervaluing of women's labor in both the family and the market.

Moreover, what seems like a flexible arrangement for some women can turn into a nightmare for others, particularly urban immigrants and the rural poor, who sometimes earn as little as 37 cents an hour sewing women's sportswear. A farm woman's embroidering of monograms on sweatsuits might modestly relieve her family's distress, but it will hardly solve the farm crisis. Similarly, undocumented aliens bringing dresses home to sew in the evenings from the new sweatshops fails to improve living conditions here or in their countries of origin.

The merger of home and workplace provides an alternative to the current organization of production but not one that challenges the place of the home in the economy or of women in the home. Nor will it provide, in most cases, a living wage for women and their children. Instead, it encourages the view that all women are secondary earners who need not have jobs that pay better, who want to work only a few hours a day. Moreover, home work discourages government support for the care of children, the sick and the elderly, as emphasized recently by a report on home-based clerical workers produced by a House Government Operations subcommittee. This individualistic solution relieves men of responsibility for family labor and reinforces the role of woman as care giver. More generous parental-leave legisla-

tion, better and affordable care for dependent relatives, comparable worth and economic-revitalization programs for rural areas can begin to address the underlying problems that home work ostensibly solves.

While the microchip revolution augurs more home-based labor, we must remember that people, not computers, will organize our use of new technologies and will decide who benefits from them. We must look beyond the workplace to

the home, and struggle for the restructuring of both to promote the economic independence of women. Only with a new home and a new workplace can home work be a good deal for women.

EILEEN BORIS

Eileen Boris, an assistant professor of history at Howard University, is writing a history of industrial home work and its regulation in the United States.

UNCIVIL LIBERTIES.

CALVIN TRILLIN

I wouldn't want it thought that I have no big-time business ambitions at all. Occasionally, I muse a bit about how much I might like being fired from a high-level position in a major American corporation. My latest inspiration is Thomas Wyman, who recently got booted out as chief executive officer of CBS. Never again will Thomas Wyman enter a room full of strangers with the certain knowledge that at least one of them is bound to grab him by the lapel and ask him why CBS sitcoms are so imbecilic; for that emancipation, he picks up somewhere between \$2 million and \$5 million, depending on how the severance agreement in his contract is interpreted. The more I read about Wyman's firing the more I realize that, even at \$2 million, it's my sort of thing.



I suppose that those grim young business-school strivers I'm always reading about still nurture a vision of corporate success based on the high-powered executive in the Hollywood movie who strides out of his office toward the board room, tossing off orders about reports and conferences and telephone calls as he goes. They see themselves as the chief executive officer of, say, J.K.L. Industries, a holding company that holds mostly holding companies.

When I see that high-powered executive in a movie, all I can think about is having to sit through all those meetings and return all those telephone calls and read all those reports. In my occasional daydreams of corporate success I see myself about to leave the board room, having just been fired as chief executive officer of J.K.L. Industries. I'm standing at the door, my hand on the knob, as the chairman of the board says, "Frankly, you've run this company like the South Vietnamese Army."

Around the long, highly polished table that's used for board meetings, the other directors nod in assent. One of them says quite loudly, "Glad to see the back of him." I hear another mumble something that sounds like "What a turkey!" I try to look solemn, or even chagrined. The chairman says, "You can pick up your \$4 million severance check from Miss Pritchard in accounting."

I do. Reaching for the check, I realize that I will no longer have to hold all of those holding companies that are, in turn, holding companies, some of which are themselves holding companies. I will no longer, in other words, feel like a Christmas shopper loaded down with too many packages.

I can simply open my arms and let everything I'm holding fall to the ground. For that I get \$4 million. I know for certain now that this is my sort of thing.

I would have thought that by now even those strivers who claim to like sitting through meetings and returning telephone calls and reading reports might share my notion of what constitutes business success. It's been clear for years, after all, that in the world of huge corporations there's nothing more lucrative than being fired well. In its annual issue on executive compensation last spring, *Business Week* reported that if it had included income from severance agreements in its charts, five of the ten highest-paid corporate executives would have been people paid for leaving rather than for working. The highest-paid executive on the chart got \$12.739 million for a year's work, which sounds like a nice piece of change until you hear that Michael C. Bergerac, who had been chairman of Revlon, got \$35 million for hitting the bricks.

Of course, not everyone can aspire to learn enough about lip gloss to become the chief executive officer of a cosmetics company, but the CBS power struggle was a reminder that these days you don't even have to be a C.E.O. in order to stop at Miss Pritchard's desk. Van Gordon Sauter, the head of CBS News, was shoved out the door with Wyman, and the papers said he would get about \$2 million. Sauter's best-known mistake as an executive was to turn the *CBS Morning News* over to Phyllis George, the former Miss America, who was widely ridiculed as a bubblehead and finally driven off the air. These days, Phyllis George gets a million or two a year from Miss Pritchard, she sleeps as late as she wants to, and nobody calls her a bubblehead. No wonder.

The new chief executive officer of CBS is Laurence Tisch, who owns a quarter of its stock. He is now the one who gets to listen to the constant complaints of the local station managers. It will be up to him to pacify egomaniacal television stars. It is now Tisch who enters any room full of strangers with the certain knowledge that at least one of them is bound to grab him by the lapel and ask him why CBS sitcoms are so imbecilic. Also, since he is rich enough to consider just about any check from Miss Pritchard the equivalent of tip money, he can't even look forward to a lucrative firing. Somehow, he is referred to regularly in the newspaper coverage of the power struggle as the winner.

MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Let's see now. On July 10, 1985, the undefended Greenpeace vessel *Rainbow Warrior* was sunk at its moorings in Auckland Harbor, New Zealand, by two deftly placed high-explosive bombs. One of the crew members, Fernando Pereira, was killed as a result. A few days later the New Zealand police arrested two members of the French Directorate General of External Security (D.G.S.E.), Maj. Alain Mafart and Capt. Dominique Prieur. On November 4, 1985, this pair pleaded guilty in the Auckland District Court to charges of manslaughter and willful damage. The French government has since made a public admission, to the Secretary General of the United Nations, that the two agents were acting under orders. On November 22, 1985, Mafart and Prieur were each sentenced to ten years in prison by the Chief Justice of New Zealand.

The subsequent history of the case is interesting, as much for what did not happen as for what did. What did happen was this. The French authorities made it plain, in public and in private, that they desired the release of the two murderers who, after all, had simply been doing their duty in policing the zone that is being poisoned by French atmospheric nuclear tests. Importers of New Zealand lamb's wool soon found that the French customs authorities were ripping their bales apart in a pretended search for drugs. State-sponsored boycotts of other New Zealand products got under way. It was made plain to New Zealand that it could expect no reprieve from this economic warfare until the two killers were released. David Lange's Labor government held out for about a year before handing over Mafart and Prieur, last July 23. In a face-saving compromise which has been much criticized in the New Zealand press and Parliament, the French government agreed to pay \$7 million in compensation and to make a full and open "apology."

In other words, a Western government dispatched professional assassins to commit murder and sabotage on the territory of a small democratic country and, when caught in the act, used its superior wealth and strength to secure their release. That's what did happen. What didn't? Well, for one thing, there was not a squeak from the Leader of the Free World or any of his underlings. The Administration has steadily met inquiries on the point with a stonewall of "no comment," though its private thinking might be gauged by a remark from former U.N. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, who emerged from a meeting with George Bush to tell reporters that the attack on the *Rainbow Warrior* was "not terrorism."

But the Reaganites are not content with mere base neutrality between the aggressor and the victim. Recall that New Zealand had done worse than allow its harbors to be used by peaceful protest ships. It had opposed and denounced French nuclear testing. And it had insisted that U.S. ships of war calling at New Zealand ports simply state whether they were carrying nuclear weapons. Acting on the stupid principle that U.S. ships "neither confirm nor deny" that they are carrying nuclear weapons, the Navy refused to supply New Zealand with a civil answer to a civil question. "I've never

understood that," said Sir Wallace Rowling, New Zealand's Ambassador in Washington and former Prime Minister, "because it's not as if the Russians don't know. Who is it they want to keep the secret from?" Good question. Sir Wallace, who is as pro-American a chap as you'll meet in a day's march, was talking to me in his embassy about the most recent policy decision that Washington has made affecting his country. That decision came on June 27, a matter of days before New Zealand agreed to release the French killers. As a result of its request to know whether nuclear weapons are being imported into its waters and harbors, New Zealand was unilaterally excluded from the longstanding Anzus Treaty. That treaty, which provided for the sharing of intelligence and information, is of the greatest importance to a remote island democracy like New Zealand. Its suspension has had the effect, and certainly had the intention, of muffling the country's ears and blindfolding its eyes. In repeated open elections New Zealanders have given their votes to a party that wants the country to be nuclear-free. The Reagan team has shown in the clearest possible way that as far as it is concerned, those votes don't count.

It's not difficult to see why New Zealanders feel the way they do. Although they are by no means isolationist in mentality—they declared war on Nazi Germany immediately after the invasion of Poland, which was a good while before the United States did—they want no part of a nuclear arms race which could lead to their destruction even though they are nonbelligerents. And, though they have no stake in this insane competition, they have already suffered from it. Bikini, Eniwetok, Christmas Island, Mururoa—these are the obscure spots where the great white powers have tested their H-bombs. Even though they said there was no danger or radiation, they still preferred to test that proposition where mainly brown-skinned people live. Imagine, then, the arrogance of a white capitalist democracy like New Zealand taking the side of the coolies and objecting to superpower pollution. Can such impudence go unpunished?

I don't think so, and though I must say that Sir Wallace Rowling doesn't agree with me, I'll tell you what I do think. I think that as well as being unshocked by the French attack on New Zealand, the U.S. government was unsurprised by it. I think that France, as the last Western nation to conduct atmospheric nuclear testing, shares the results of those tests with NATO in return for silence about its policy of nuclear colonialism in the Pacific. I think the D.G.S.E. knew in advance that there wouldn't be a squeak from London or Washington if its agents were caught planting mines and bombs in Auckland Harbor. I think it knew that they would be protected by the Elysée Palace and that blackmail would be exerted to get them out. I think it knew that there wouldn't be a squeak about that either. I think you don't have to believe in conspiracies to notice that the above explanation is the only one that fits all the known facts. I think even the mildest interpretation of the selfsame facts exposes all the bully talk about "international terrorism" and "state-sponsored terrorism" as the rancid hypocrisy that it is.

ARTICLES.

■ A MOVEMENT TAKES STOCK

Environmentalism
Turns 16

SETH ZUCKERMAN

Ask Brock Evans, Washington lobbyist for the Audubon Society, what he thinks of the lie-down-in-front-of-the-bulldozer approach to environmentalism practiced by Earth First!, and he scoffs, "I want to know how many acres they've saved in the last few years." Earth First! founder Dave Foreman's response is, "How many acres have they given away?" In the sixteen years since the first Earth Day, the most prominent environmental groups have become more savvy and more pragmatic politically as they have blended into the Washington landscape. But another brand of environmentalism steers clear of Washington, maintains the passion that launched the movement, and is pursuing the most exciting innovations in the field today. This motley collection includes Foreman and his band of monkey-wrenchers; grass-roots activists on issues such as hazardous waste and garbage incineration; bioregionalists; and elements of some of the big national groups.

As the movement has matured, many national groups have adopted sophisticated tactics, a development whose merits are hotly debated by environmentalists. Some benefits are hard to deny: for instance, the Sierra Club's computerized index of its 377,000 members by Congressional district makes it easier for the group to organize letter-writing campaigns to key senators and representatives. The Audubon Society, with a half-million members, has put together a similar index. The Sierra Club's Washington office, which had only one full-time staff member in 1970, has seventeen today. Prominent environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society and the National Wildlife Federation, appeared this summer on the *National Journal's* list of outfits with the best access to the capital's decision-makers. Most leaders of these groups celebrate the movement's growing influence on government policy. "The environmental movement used to be about stopping things: increasingly, it's about doing things," says Ralph Cavanagh, senior staff attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council (N.R.D.C.).

But the changes on K Street don't sit well with all the activists on Main Street. Foreman criticizes the Washington contingent for trying to gain respectability through compromise. "You should never support a piece of legislation;

you should always be asking for more," he says. Lisa Finaldi, chair of the New York City-based Radioactive Waste Campaign, says many activists are so concerned about their credibility that when they fight a threat, "their attitude is, Can we hold this back and still appear reasonable?" Foreman and Finaldi regret that the environmental lobby has become less distinguishable from its adversaries in industry and government. "It's becoming just another business—everyone has to wear a suit and have a lap computer in their briefcase," says Finaldi.

Not only are the sides wearing the same uniforms, they're even trading players. Cecil Andrus, Secretary of the Interior under Jimmy Carter, was on the Audubon Society's board of directors from 1981 to 1984 and has been a paid consultant to the Wilderness Society. Rupert Cutler, who was Assistant Secretary of Agriculture in charge of the Forest Service, became executive director of the Audubon Society in late 1980 and now heads Population-Environment Balance. Two high-level staff members of the Wilderness Society both worked for the Carter Administration: the society's chief lobbyist at the Bureau of Land Management, Terry Sopher, headed the government's wilderness program, and its director of wildlife-refuge programs, William Reffalt, planned new refuges in Alaska. When business executives move between industry and government, progressives scream bloody murder. When environmentalists do it, the practice triggers a different fear: not that the activists will corrupt the government but that the government will corrupt the activists. "When I was chief lobbyist for the Wilderness Society, I was becoming tempted by the idea that I could become Assistant Secretary of the Interior," Foreman admits. Operating in the Washington milieu "tends to make you friendly with the agencies you should be watching over and criticizing." But Ken Ketwig of the Audubon Society says, "It hasn't lessened our stridency; it's improved our effectiveness."

One of the tools that the environmental movement has adopted from the mainstream is economic analysis. First trotted out by conservationists in 1970 against the supersonic transport plane, this type of study is now indispensable to their arguments. "It's been a revelation to us that practices that are environmentally destructive are also economically unsound," says Douglas Wheeler, executive director of the Sierra Club. Construction of many expensive new power plants has been halted on economic grounds. More recently, financial analyses have become a weapon against the sale of timber from national forests. Peter Emerson, who heads the Wilderness Society's fourteen-person resource planning and economics division, cites a study by the Office of Management and Budget showing that those timber sales cost the taxpayers \$621 million in fiscal 1985 when road building and other expenses are figured in. "If you quote those numbers," says Wheeler, "a Congressman will respond more readily than if you just say, Gee, I don't like 'em cutting trees." Foreman cautions that economics should remain a tool and not become an end in itself. "If

Seth Zuckerman, a San Francisco-based writer and energy consultant, is co-author, with Amory Hunter Lovins, of Energy Unbound: A Fable for America's Future (Sierra Club Books).

you begin to depend on economic arguments alone, then you've bought the other side's line—hook, line and sinker," he says.

The Washington environmentalists have made alliances with some groups that once opposed conservation. The movement has made common cause with unions on the matters of herbicide spraying in national forests and emissions from chemical plants, in an alliance sometimes called the Budweiser-Yogurt Coalition. For instance, the National Clean Air Coalition includes the United Steelworkers of America and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, along with consumer and environmental groups. In addition, citizens in western Colorado fighting chemical discharges from a Louisiana-Pacific waferboard plant have the help of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. A group Wheeler founded, the American Farmland Trust, forged a link between environmentalists and farmers concerned about soil conservation. The National Taxpayers Union has joined the environmental coalition in opposition to astronomical government spending on pork-barrel water projects, road building in national forests and subsidies to conventional energy sources—expenditures to which environmentalists object on conservationist as well as economic grounds. Within the environmental movement, groups avoid duplicating one another's efforts and form coalitions so that research outfits such as the Environmental Policy Institute can complement the lobbying power of the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society.

The national environmental organizations have felt a pinch since James Watt's departure from the Interior Department. Watt's radical opposition to conservation boosted many groups' membership by as much as 90 percent; now those groups face the challenge of retaining their new members. "[Interior Secretary] Donald Hodel is doing for Mr. Reagan what Watt did for Mr. Reagan," says David Brower, the founder of Friends of the Earth and an arch-conservationist, "but he lacks the quality of making environmentalists mad enough to build our membership." Brower resigned last month from the Friends of the Earth board, one year after it laid off most of its staff and moved from San Francisco to Washington. He had fought that move bitterly because he thought it would turn the organization into just another lobbying group.

When environmentalism took its place on the national agenda in the early 1970s, many professional conservationists clustered in Washington. They promoted landmark antipollution and wilderness protection laws, including the Clean Water acts of 1972 and 1977, the Resource Conservation and Recovery acts of 1976 and 1984 and the Alaska Public Lands bill of 1980, and they pressed for enforcement. But times have been lean since the Reagan Administration came to power, and the movement's momentum has shifted from the capital to the grass roots. Even the Sierra Club is planning to intensify its efforts at the state level. The Potomac conservationists still assert their importance—"We've got to be there to influence the process

because we know that night and day, the timber interests and the developers are doing the same thing," says Evans of the Audubon Society—but the innovations and the passion are coming from the hinterland.

Increasingly, conservationists are using demonstration projects to add credibility to their proposals. "People are taking federalism seriously and using the states as laboratories to try out their ideas," says the N.R.D.C.'s Cavanagh. The N.R.D.C. has advocated that utilities pay outright to retrofit homes and businesses with energy-efficiency devices; it is now testing the feasibility of that notion in a countywide home retrofitting program in Hood River, Oregon, and is planning a commercial lighting program in Seattle. The Small Farm Resources Project in Nebraska works with farmers to develop farming techniques that use less energy, water and chemical fertilizer. And the American Farmland Trust, which lobbies in Washington to conserve agricultural resources, also operates a pilot program to show how land trusts can preserve farmland.

Not surprisingly, the greatest degree of experimentation and local initiative is coming in connection with the hottest environmental issue of the decade—toxic waste. In the 1970s, says Michael McCloskey, longtime executive director and now chair of the Sierra Club, toxics was a "top-down" issue. "We could generate hardly any mail on the issue," he says. "Today it's a bottom-up issue, and the national organizations are being pushed to act by the people at home." The Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes works with 1,300 local groups, about 1,000 of which have come into existence since the beginning of 1984. The groups have coalesced around issues such as ground-water contamination, waste dumps and, most recently, plans to incinerate municipal garbage. "It's the threat of something in their own backyard that gets people going," says Ruth Lampi, grass-roots coordinator of the Environmental Task Force. Observers note that the issue has mobilized people who had never been politically active and who wouldn't consider themselves leftists or liberals, from Native Americans in Oklahoma to members of garden clubs in Alabama. With time grass-roots groups have matured beyond their original position of "Not in My Backyard," to demand, "Not in Anybody's Backyard" and to advocate alternative disposal methods such as microbial digestion and thermal destruction in closed systems. The local groups understandably take a tougher stance than the national groups, since they will have to live with the settlements they win. "If somebody's worried about the health of their children, they won't be convinced by appeals to political pragmatism," says Foreman. Lois Gibbs, executive director of the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes, charges that the smaller groups have often been sandbagged and ignored by the nationals. She is planning a conference of environmental leaders, to be held this winter, to reduce friction between local and national activists.

Even within national groups, the grass roots and the central leadership sometimes go in different directions. The Radioactive Waste Campaign concentrated on low-level radioactive waste from its inception, in 1978, and it is now

beginning to work on the military's nuclear wastes, which have been dumped in trenches, most of them unlined, at twelve sites throughout the country. Until this month the campaign was part of the Sierra Club. It struck out on its own because, among other reasons, its members felt hamstrung by a requirement to meet clubwide salary scales, which the campaign could not afford to do, and a restriction that kept them from canvassing. In another internal controversy, some members sought to make the prevention of nuclear war a priority issue for the club, while others, including many of the top staff, argued that the link to the club's environmental mission was too tenuous. Eventually the membership voted to take on the issue, but disagreement persists about the dedication with which the staff is pursuing it. Anne Ehrlich heads the Sierra Club's Committee on the Environmental Effects of Warfare and wasn't surprised that people were hesitant to join the cause. "We were introducing a new and superficially different issue," she says. "We got the same reaction twenty years ago when air and water pollution hit the front burners and people were much more interested in preserving forests." The club has just released its first publication dealing with the issue—an anthology on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

More than any of the other new offshoots of environmentalism, the bioregional movement has stepped beyond the bounds of legislative and institutional reform. In the 1970s, when basic environmental goals such as clean air and water began to gain credibility, says Peter Berg of the Planet Drum Foundation in San Francisco, "it began to appear that classic environmentalism would find its limit in litigating court cases." The bioregional movement developed as a result, and it focuses on the relationship between people and the land. Bioregionalists' projects range from the restoration of a salmon run in a northern California river to the preservation of family farms in Pennsylvania and the cataloging of native prairie plants in Kansas. The movement recently held its second biennial continentwide congress, drawing about 165 people [see Kirkpatrick Sale, "How-to Bioregional," *The Nation*, September 27]. "Protests and demonstrations may point out what's wrong," says Berg, "but undertaking projects for filling human needs in ways that complement restoring or maintaining life places is the only practical approach for showing how the right things can be done."

Where do the two trails of the environmental movement lead? There is little doubt that the professionals will continue to make crucial contributions in Congress and the courts—for instance, in the current battle over Superfund legislation and the impending fight over the reauthorization of the Clean Air Act. But the people advancing the frontiers of the movement are the ones who are attracting constituencies by organizing against hazardous wastes in communities and workplaces, building new coalitions, demonstrating the success of utility-financed conservation, and knowing and maintaining their unique environments. They're bringing environmentalism into people's daily lives, and there can be no stronger foundation for the practical and political struggles that are required to clean up the continent. □

■ PINOCHET STRIKES AGAIN

Reports of My Death

ARIEL DORFMAN

"The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." From the time I heard Mark Twain's famous phrase, I had always thought it would be extremely amusing to be able to quote it. When that opportunity finally came a few weeks ago, however, it was not so amusing as I had imagined: a telephone call on September 12 announced that I had been murdered in Chile.

The news came at the end of one of the most depressing weeks in my country's history. After the failed attempt on his life, on September 7, Gen. Augusto Pinochet, our dictator for the past thirteen years, went wild. This was the pretext he had been waiting for to crush an opposition that had been mounting a campaign of protracted civil disobedience against him. He declared a state of siege, shut down six magazines and a couple of news agencies, raided shantytowns, expelled foreign priests. His secret policemen picked up a number of prominent dissidents. Some of those were lucky. They were carted off to an official jail—paradoxically, one of the only secure places to be if the death squads are also out to get you. Others were arrested by men without warrants, and their bodies, riddled with bullets, began turning up several days later all over Santiago.

Thousands of miles away, in North Carolina, where I spend each fall semester teaching at Duke University, I anxiously awaited the identification of the bodies, and learned with horror that one of the executed men was a friend. Journalist José Carrasco had been my literature student at the University of Chile many years ago. I had taught him *Don Quixote*. We had talked on a couple of occasions since my return to Santiago to settle down after twelve years of exile, in December of 1985. The last time I saw him was at a funeral march for a murdered student. After spending some years in a Chilean concentration camp after the 1973 coup, he had gone into eight years of exile in Mexico and now, like me, had come back to live in his own land. He showed me his two sons, who felt more Mexican than Chilean. "This is the man," he said to them, pointing at me, "who taught me to joust with windmills." We didn't finish our conversation because, as usually happens at funerals in Chile, more dangerous than mere windmills, the police had arrived to interrupt the procession, and in the pandemonium that ensued, we lost sight of each other.

Now it was his funeral that would be disrupted, and I, of course, would not be there. Once again the country was being destroyed, and I was far away. The horror was com-

Ariel Dorfman's novel The Last Song of Manuel Sendero will be published next February by Viking.

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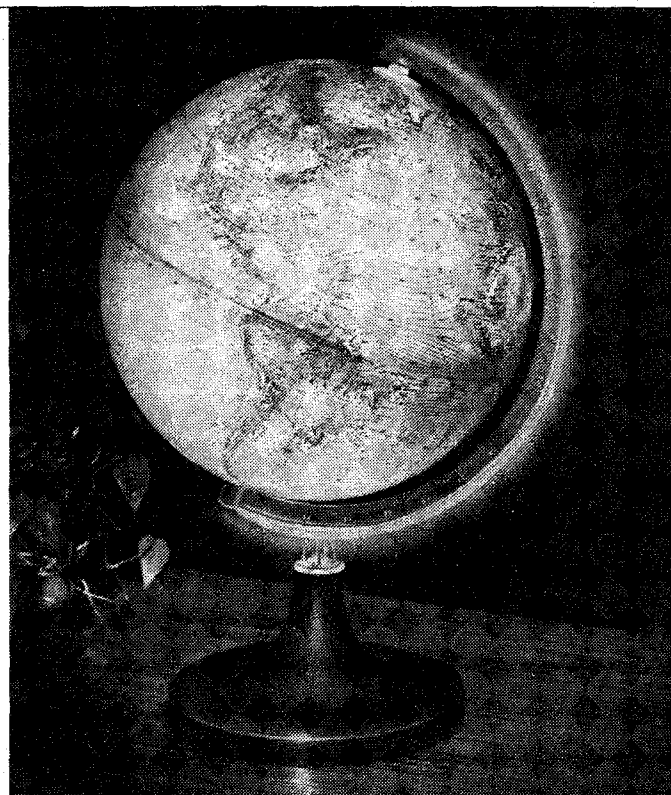
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pounded by its familiarity: it was as if we were all caught up, one more time, in the endless repetition of the 1973 coup. The terror was widespread. When I called on the phone, my friends did not answer. They had gone into hiding. It was enough for the police to be hunting an undetermined 500 to induce thousands of others to leave home, sleeping in their clothes at night, just in case. Carrasco had been taken out in his underwear. "Don't put on your shoes," they had said to him. "You won't be needing them." Suddenly, to the new despair about what was happening to my country was added the old, bitter feeling of impotence that had haunted the long years of my exile, before Pinochet had allowed me to return home: a funeral is being held, a boot is breaking down the door to your friend's house, a woman in a slum who gave you tea is watching troops shatter her windows and bayonet her mattress, a priest who stood in front of tanks to stop a raid is being put on a plane while his parishioners sing at the airport so that at least he will be able to hear them one last time. If there was finally something you could do . . .

The next day, however, when a reporter from United Press International called to inform me that a wire dispatched from Buenos Aires had just announced that one of the other corpses found in Chile had now been identified and was none other than my own, I was brutally reminded that distance from one's country when a dictator rules is not only a curse; it can also confer the ambiguous relief of safety.

As a child, I always wanted to survive my own death. I desired no more than a couple of hours. It would be fun, I thought, to witness how people reacted.

But just let that childhood dream come true, and you will realize that there is nothing to recommend the experience. Besides the pain to one's family and friends, the feverish calls all around the world, what is hard to dismiss is the sensation that in some odd way you may, indeed, have died.

That could be why I automatically reached for my Mark Twain phrase. Those wryly elegant words still serve today, as perhaps they did when they were first pronounced, to give you time to get used to a strange feeling of ghostliness. After all, somewhere in the world there is someone who already thinks of you as past and fixed and irretrievable, and thinks it strongly enough to have scattered the news to the four winds. Humor at least allows you to pretend you are not worried about that day when, inevitably, you will not be around to make your disavowals.

But no amount of quipping and joking could dispel the undeniable death of somebody else back in Santiago, the news of whose killing was, unfortunately, not in the least exaggerated. And there was also the matter of making sense of the whole macabre affair. Was I receiving a warning from the Chilean government, a not-so-subtle way of suggesting that I should not return to my country, as I had been planning to do again, at the end of this year? It would be consistent with all sorts of verbal incursions that had escalated against me in the past months: an attack by Jesse Helms on

the Senate floor, accusing me of being "one of the prime disinformation agents of the radical Chilean left"; several denunciations in Chile's right-wing media, along with a barrage of hate mail, some of it with a decidedly anti-Semitic tint. The secret police back home discovered long ago that a threat against somebody's life is often as effective as an outright assault on it and does not exact as high a political cost. Now, I surmised, they were applying their wisdom to me.

A few calls to Argentina quickly banished that idea. News of my death had appeared in several Buenos Aires newspapers the morning of September 12. The previous night there was a gigantic solidarity rally for Chile in one of the city's stadiums. One of the orators, Jorge Lavandero, a Chilean left-wing Christian Democrat, had, according to journalists present, denounced my brutal murder in Santiago. Several hours later Lavandero issued a disclaimer: he had been reading one of my poems to the multitude, and members of the press, unable to hear well because of the shouting of slogans, had misinterpreted his words and forthwith ousted me from this world. The corpse had, in fact, been identified that very night as that of Abraham Mustkablíe, an accountant abducted from his home by a group of agents wearing ski masks at dawn on September 8.

And, yet, to ascertain that the news of my death originated in journalistic bumbling has not helped me put the affair behind me. I cannot shake the certainty that there could be some sort of warning in that news dispatch.

I have learned that in order to live under a dictatorship you must tame your imagination. Signs of violence and foreboding are everywhere, and if you do not want to be paralyzed by fear, you must learn to shut those signs out. I can remember being awakened many times in the silent dawn of curfew in Santiago by the approaching sound of cars—and returning to sleep without giving the matter a second thought, pretending that there was no danger. There is no other way to keep sane when death is an everyday possibility.

One month before he was burned alive by soldiers in a Santiago slum, 19-year-old Rodrigo Rojas de Negri attended the funeral of a 19-year-old student shot by troops in the streets. The photographs Rodrigo snapped that day have survived him, and they are haunting. It is as if you were looking through his now-dead eyes not only at what he saw then but at what he would have seen if he had photographed his own funeral a month later, when the police beat up the mourners, tried to steal the coffin and tear-gassed the crowd on the way to the cemetery.

Did Rodrigo have the slightest notion that he was taking pictures of his own burial? I doubt it; such thoughts would have unnerved him, leaving the military firmly in control of his dreams and the rhythm of his life. He clicked the camera and shut his eyes to the gray prefigurations of his own fate.

A year and a half before, in March 1985, human rights activist José Manuel Parada was investigating a paramilitary squad. "I think they're about to kill somebody," he told Andrés Domínguez, executive secretary of the Chilean Human Rights Commission. He did not dare to guess that the somebody in question was himself. Three days later, just as he had dropped his kids off at school, a group of men

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—HANNAH ARENDT

H.R. Shapiro should be read by every citizen who is a republican in the true sense of the word, that is to say, someone who cares for the Public Thing and believes it is too important a matter to be handed over to professional politicians.

—W.H. AUDEN

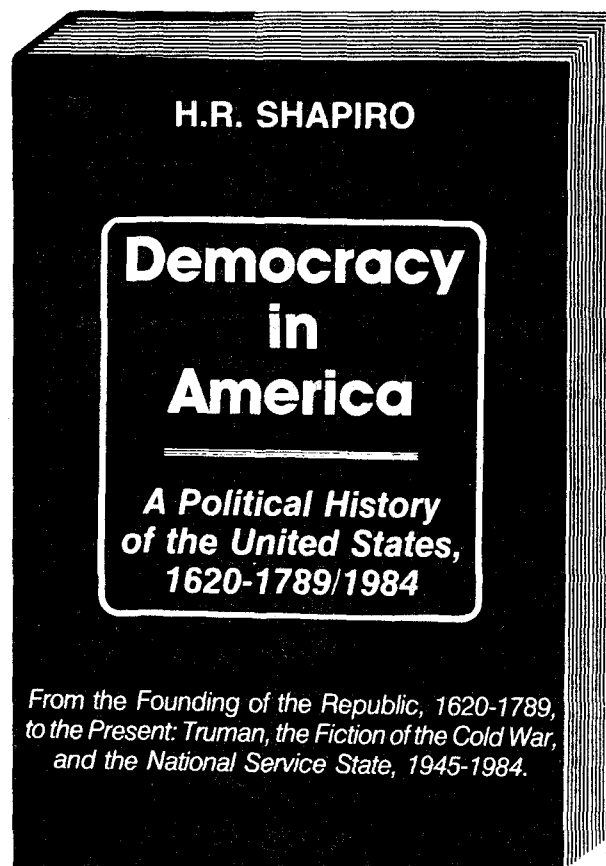
No one who wishes to keep his mind clear can even read a hundredth of the pages of printed paper that assail him daily. But in spite of my reluctance to receive another periodical I found myself pausing over the very first number of [H.R. Shapiro's] *The Public Life*. I approve its . . . fresh approach to matters of public concern now buried under both reactionary and revolutionary clichés.

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kidnapped him. The next day his body, along with those of two other Communist professionals, was dumped by the wayside, not a mile from where Rodrigo Rojas would be thrown by the soldiers who burned him. Their throats had been slashed.

From where did those anticipations of their own death come? From the future that they refused to acknowledge, from the shadow of violence that was already engulfing them? It could well be. Living under Pinochet, I have learned not to laugh at those who, in order to survive, treat the universe as if it were a hidden book which the imagination can decipher. I am not, after all, applying any rationality to my own case.

Even though the news of my death might be fraudulent, its possibility was all too real. Everybody who had read the Buenos Aires papers had found it quite natural that I, or any Chilean for that matter, could be murdered. Ever since the coup that terminated democracy in Chile, I have been living on borrowed time—trying either to escape that death or to ignore it. My exile thirteen years ago was a way of avoiding it; my return to Chile at the end of last year, while Pinochet was still in power, was a way of making believe it would not touch me. And so, when the news of my murder arrived, it took its place in a long series—one more in a chain of horrors, all the deaths flowing into the slow and endless death of Chile itself. I am contaminated. That is the final message of the death that brushed by my body and did not settle there. I find it difficult to remember a time when there were other forms of passing away, that people can die of old age or of sickness or in car accidents.

I regret to say that Mark Twain's quotation is less apt than I originally believed. The reports of my death have not, alas, been that greatly exaggerated. □

I Dreamed I Saw

(Continued From Front Cover)

Kahn it is the latter. He writes and sings songs of love, some of them touching, and of current causes: labor, feminism, gay liberation, Central America, disarmament. He accompanies himself on the guitar, singing of new issues in the old style. Unlike Seeger, whose songs genuinely move audiences, Kahn's songs are so bad that it's hard to see how any of the people whose voice he affects would want to sing them. In an updated version of what we used to call white liberal tolerance, Kahn, singing as a man who "loves women," celebrates his friendship with a gay man:

*There's no need to keep it from me
You can come right out and tell me
You know I love you just the way you are.*

A cry of "Thanks, Si" rises from a thousand gay throats.

Jesse Lemisch is a professor of American colonial and social history on the faculty of the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is currently a visiting professor of history at Baruch College, City University of New York.

When he spoke for the victims of sexual harassment—"they say it's oll yer folt"—the women in the audience around me winced. "They call you in their office/And they stare straight at your breasts," he sang. The sentiments are fine, but Kahn is completely unaware of the arrogance and condescension of his setting himself up in this way as definer of the pain of sexual harassment. Finally, perhaps the ultimate in misplaced authenticity: he sang of his ancestors' flight from the Cossacks, proceeding to a song of the concentration camps, accompanied by a dulcimer, and, again, in the voice of the cracker.

Kahn imitates the old forms nicely, but why bother? There is much that is noble in these traditions and in the struggles associated with them, but isn't there sufficient dignity and significance in the causes that Kahn sings about to let them be expressed in a modern voice? Why are *they* the real people, and not *us*? To return to Seeger—who is currently on tour with Kahn and has just released a joint recording with him—what goes through the minds of his many college-educated listeners when he leads them in singing Malvina Reynolds's anthem of middle-class embarrassment, "Little Boxes," in which people go to college, become doctors, lawyers and executives—"And they're all made out of ticky-tacky/And they all look just the same"? Why must the left dress up in workers' garb? The whole guilt-trip associated with the notion that blue overalls, and only blue overalls, are where it's at is sexist, aesthetically retrograde and deeply out of touch with the realities of class in America today. Why does authenticity reside only in the accents of the South and West, anywhere but in New York City? How was it determined that this must be the voice in which we speak to America? Why is it such a bad thing to be a Jew in left folk song? Why, at a time when so much of avant-garde culture is crossing over toward a mass audience, does the left, with more important messages to convey, intentionally remain so isolated? What we have is a culture descended from a noble tradition of popular struggles—one whose public rehearsal is an important ritual of affirmation for those of us who grew up in it—that leaves us speaking a language that more and more Americans don't understand.

A related complex distorts left film and documentary, where the question of truthfulness is raised more directly. The dominant aesthetic of this genre, which we might call first-person heroic, became the documentary style of the New Left, but it has its origin in the aesthetic of the left of the 1930s. In its older version we were presented with the voice of the people, apparently unmediated. The style strongly expressed the idea that the testimony of those who participated in great events is the truth, needing no comment or analysis. In fact, as William Stott shows in *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, the alleged voice of the people was deeply mediated in the documentaries of the 1930s, sometimes through the selection of data and sometimes through misrepresentation and outright deception.

Seeing Red and other left documentaries are descended from that aesthetic. Their stories are told largely in the first person, with contemporary clips and with narration playing a secondary role. Truth and art are seen to be at odds, with

truth given a lower priority as a merely academic concern. The films and their "unsung heroes" are described in the promotional literature as "inspiring" and "stunning," and no one would deny their power.

But the films mishandle first-person testimony, leading to ahistoricity, and, finally, to falsehood. First-person testimony is important in the reconstruction of history, particularly for getting at the lives of ordinary people. Social historians have been turning to material like the Works Progress Administration's extraordinary collection of slave reminiscences, which was largely ignored by the profession until the 1960s. A new history that focuses on biographies of ordinary people has produced modern classics such as Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre* and Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms*. These works rely on first-person testimony, but never uncritically, and never alone. History is complicated; people disagree. For all the filmmakers' antiacademicism, their characters take on the authority that we associate with the textbook. There is little sense of the complexity of the past and little confrontation between conflicting views. Interviewers' questions are admiring and credulous. The simple repetition of pieties and platitudes by people who were "there" is not history.

Despite the subordination of truth to story-telling, the irony is that, ultimately, these documentaries are boring. They are didactic and klutzy. They look like the 1930s, and they speak in the ancestral visual language. Pete Seeger praises *Union Maids*: "No, it's not wide screen, not color. Hell with all that. It's real." The assumption is clear: plainness and antiquated presentation translate into truth. As Seeger's statement suggests, the appearance of these films has as much to do with ideology as with money; it's militant amateurism. Seeger's assumptions dominate contemporary left aesthetics, reinforcing a New Left notion that concern with form is "bourgeois" and elitist. Those assumptions are present in film, in new but old-fashioned agitprop theater, and in public-access cable television, an area of enormous potential but one in which the impact of otherwise promising left efforts has been limited by the rejection of mainstream technology and the use of such devices as hand-held and hand-lettered signs. The same applies to much left journalism. A direct-mail solicitation from a brand-new left magazine boasts that it "isn't slick," has "no lavish color spreads" and is "printed entirely on newsprint." In these ways the left fails to address people raised on and thoroughly at home with a more advanced, "bourgeois" aesthetic.

Finally, for all its plainness and artlessness, sometimes what we see in this left genre just isn't true. The euphemism "progressive" hangs heavily over some of the films, masking the presence of the Communist Party. This cuts both ways, suppressing the Communist role that is open to criticism and also concealing the party's positive accomplishments. *The Good Fight* is, to say the least, a debatable view of the Spanish Civil War. *Seeing Red* has come under heavy fire from researchers who have compared the 400 interviews done by the filmmakers with the fifteen actually used. Looking at what was edited out, Phyllis Jacobson, writing in *New Politics*, accuses *Seeing Red* of presenting a "fairly

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tale version of Party life and history." Harvey Klehr, writing in *Labor History*, has pointed out the disproportionately low presence of Jews in the film, and he objects to the film's caricature of anti-Communism, as if the only critique of the C.P. came from Richard Nixon and J. Edgar Hoover. The film is one long platitude, epitomized in Seeger's remarks on the C.P. ("Better to have loved and lost . . ."), followed by a scene of Seeger chopping wood in the cold. The left should be embarrassed by the authoritarianism, manipulation and falsehood in much of the current documentary-film genre.

There are new ways of looking at the world, some from inside the left, some from outside. Say what we will about the values of television advertising and MTV, we recognize their form as distinctly contemporary, and so does much of America. They offer us rapid movement, mobile cameras, quick cutting, excitement, condensed expression, wit, comedy and attractive color. While I hold plenty of reservations about content, anyone who wants to talk to Americans—as the left presumably does—must understand this language.

MTV's influence has pervaded the culture, and, as we will see, the left is beginning to produce some visual images that have a similar look. But even in the mainstream there are some fine examples of the use of music video to convey political messages. One thinks of the Eurythmics and Aretha Franklin's video, "Sisters Are Doin' It for Themselves." The strongest evidence that real songs of protest can be presented in the music video genre is Artists United Against Apartheid's "Sun City," written by Little Steven Van Zandt and produced by Van Zandt and Arthur Baker, which topped both *The Village Voice's* and *The New York Times's* list of singles for 1985 [see "'Sun City' Rap," *The Nation*, December 21, 1985]. "Sun City" delivers a hard political message in the contemporary idiom, reaching a mass audience and making what Robert Christgau calls "the essential rock and roll equation between celebration and revolt."

The most powerful example I know of an emerging left aesthetic is found in the work of the American Social History Project, which, in its own way, draws on music video and underground comics, as well as other influences. Begun at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York under the supervision of the late social historian Herbert Gutman, the project has turned out a prize-winning collection of films and audiovisual productions, under the overall direction of Stephen Brier and with the magnificent art direction of Joshua Brown. This work represents a striking alternative to the traditional aesthetic and is a fascinating example of left culture in transition.

The project's most ambitious production to date is the thirty-minute film *1877: The Grand Army of Starvation*. In that year, propelled by economic depression and pay cuts, 80,000 railroad workers struck, and across the country hundreds of thousands of others joined a national protest which was called the Great Uprising. Describing these events, *1877* is full of visual excitement, much faster than what we expect from this genre. The color is beautiful, and the camera is wonderfully active: it pans, zooms in on detail, pulls back.

Among the basic materials used in *1877* are nineteenth-century graphics: black-line wood engravings from the newspapers of the day. But they are put into motion by two deliberate anachronisms: tinting and animation. Brown found that the engravings looked "archaic, static and murky to audiences accustomed to the photographic and moving image." Rather than immerse us in this antique look, Brown tinted the engravings, as he says, "to bring out details and add dimensionality to the drawings." Suddenly, we are looking at a colorful scene that conveys familiarity and reality, rather than a dead and impossibly unreal past. Sometimes the graphics are retouched and animated, and the film has the overall appearance of a cartoon. Based on stills, *1877* is more of a movie than are the left documentaries.

The sound of this film is also innovative. An original score by Jane Ira Bloom takes us far from the folk singer's guitar to synthesizer, trumpet, percussion and soprano saxophone. Just as the period graphics were colored to avoid archaisms, so was a deliberate decision made to avoid folk music, with its archaic connotations.

Like *Seeing Red*, *1877* uses first-person testimony. But in *1877* there is a strong narrative for which the first-person testimony is illustration. The narrative is spoken, powerfully, by James Earl Jones. Seeing the past through the mediation of the narrator brings us closer to reality than does the unmediated presentation of first-person testimony. Oral history is not history; narrative is. Here we are not left on our own to worship past heroes.

Another of the project's productions, a slide/tape presentation titled "Tea-Party Etiquette," offers a fine example of a critical approach to oral history. "Tea-Party Etiquette" is an adaptation of Alfred Young's biography of George Hewes, the shoemaker who was lionized late in life for having been at the Boston Tea Party. "Tea-Party Etiquette" shows a biographer interviewing and arguing with Hewes, challenging his memory of the event. The effect is like watching Mike Wallace hector someone on *60 Minutes*. It's lively, but, more than that, it adds layers to our understanding of the complexities of the past at a point where *Seeing Red* closes down and presents a single sanctified vision.

The only other left documentary I know of that breaks with the frozen conventions of the 1930s—there must be others—is Jill Godmilow's *Far From Poland*. Unable to make the trip to Poland to do a film on Solidarity, she instead uses all sorts of comic and imaginative devices. An actor walks through the countryside reciting the published reminiscences of a government censor who came over to Solidarity, the scene set to a laugh track. Blackout. With melodramatic piano music in the background, there's Fidel on the telephone, delivering an apologia for Soviet policy on Poland and lecturing Godmilow on art and politics. ("It's your nickel," she tells him.) This film has the mark not of the 1930s but of Jean-Luc Godard, with a touch of *Laugh-In*.

What all of this adds up to is not solely a question of aesthetics; it is also a question of politics and honesty. The aesthetic I've criticized is disingenuous; it has not and it will not serve the left well. If that is the best we can do, the American people show their good sense by not listening. □

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OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

"I was horrified to learn this morning of the killing of Palestinians which has taken place in Beirut. All people of decency must share our outrage and revulsion over the murders, which included women and children." (NY Times 9/19/82)

"For the criminals who did this deed, no punishment is enough to remove the blot of their crime." (AP 9/20/82)

—Ronald Reagan



Those words were pronounced by President Reagan in September 1982, after the world learned of the massacre of hundreds of defenseless Lebanese and Palestinian civilians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila.

Today, four years later, Major General Amos Yaron, who was the senior Israeli officer presiding over military operations in the camps during the massacres, has been appointed Israel's Military Attache to the United States. His major task will be to oversee the annual \$1.8 billion in American military aid and arms to Israel.

In August 1982, special U.S. envoy Philip Habib negotiated the withdrawal of Palestinian forces from Beirut. According to that agreement the United States guaranteed the safety of the remaining Palestinian civilians and obtained Israel's assurance that its armed forces would not enter West Beirut. Israel, breaking its own pledge, occupied West Beirut and surrounded the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps on September 15, 1982.

On September 16, 1982, then Brigadier General Amos Yaron, under orders from the Israeli Ministry of Defense, allowed Phalangist troops to enter the refugee camps even though the same troops had previously engaged in massacres of Palestinians living in Lebanon. The killing at the refugee camps went on for three days. During nighttime Phalangist operations, General Yaron's troops fired illumination rounds so the Phalangists could continue their bloody work. Israeli troops, under the command of General Yaron, blocked the exits of the camps to prevent the refugees from escaping and supplied the Phalangists with at least one bulldozer, which was used to cover bodies with rubble.

In his testimony to the official Israeli Commission of Inquiry into the massacre (Kahan Commission), Yaron said he was "happy" about the decision to send the Phalangist forces into the refugee camps because "the fighting serves their purposes as well, so let them participate and not let the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] do everything."

Under the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which was signed by both the United States and Israel, by his complicity in the massacre, Yaron allowed the willful causing of "great suffering" and "serious injury" to the residents of the camps, who were legally "protected persons." In so doing, Yaron is guilty of "grave breaches" under Article 147 of the Geneva Convention.

The U.S. government's acceptance of the Yaron appointment as Military Attache betrays a degree of moral indifference rivaling that shown by Yaron himself, four years ago in Beirut.

In the name of decency, we call upon the President to immediately revoke General Yaron's diplomatic credentials.

(Partial list of signers follows)

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

A Mirror for Magistrates

ROBERT PATTISON

“**T**elevision is the Che Guevara of modern society,” Senator William Proxmire warned, but since only twenty of his colleagues concurred in his assessment of this “revolutionary tool,” live television coverage is now a permanent feature of the world’s greatest deliberative body.

The Senate’s debate of July 29, which ended with the installation of TV cameras, was unremarkable for its outcome, which was all but inevitable. Its interest lies in the notions about television’s power set forth by the participants. Here in the last proceedings of the Senate to be recorded only in print, one can find the views of one hundred ambitious, successful Americans on the most controversial medium of the age. As befits members of a democratic assembly, the senators’ views on television are representative of the nation’s, even if they are more judicious and pragmatic than those advanced in barroom politics or social commentary. And like the prevailing theories of television’s influence, the senators’ opinions are marked by fear, platitude and lack of imagination.

Senator Proxmire proposes a view of television apparently validated by the political ascendancy of the actor Ronald Reagan. Television is “a medium which will reward the demagogue,” he says. “Recall those flickering films of Adolf Hitler speaking at Nuremberg.” Proxmire’s dark assessment of television’s role in contemporary affairs owes something to a body of opinion whose adherents are as diverse as Yeats, Theodor Adorno and Christopher Lasch. This view is the antithesis of McLuhan’s description of television as a cool medium. As Proxmire has it, we have been spared a Hitler only by the intercession of the TV industry’s monopoly capitalism, which has filled the airwaves with pap instead of propaganda. But with the coming of cable, videotape and satellite relay, the age of network monopoly is passing, and the era of the freelance demagogue is upon us. Accord-

ing to Proxmire, the cool, reasonable mien of a Tom Brokaw or a Peter Jennings will be unequal to the passionate intensity of the evangelist, and the grim new age is personified by the rough beast, Jimmy Swaggart. Once freed of monopoly, TV will sire the “true believer.” Rationality and compromise in public affairs will slowly wane, to be replaced by acrimony and self-aggrandizement in public debate. “Television will make it easier for demagogues to win election to the Senate.”

There are several untenable assumptions here. First among them is the unspoken belief that in the pre-electronic golden age, public affairs were discussed in a spirit of rational conciliation, which was nurtured by a print medium that encouraged vigorous debate and sensible compromise. This is fiction. The Missouri Compromise was the most extensively debated piece of legislation in American history. Even if its very name seems to exude reasoned conciliation, it was enacted by a Congress where pandemonium was commonplace and where debate might end on the field of honor. In 1826, then-Vice President Henry Clay took such offense at the calculated insults of Senator John Randolph of Virginia that he challenged him to a duel, which was then held on the banks of the Potomac. The media in that enlightened age—that is, the partisan newspapers like the Democratic *Brooklyn Eagle* where Walt Whitman was editor in 1847—blithely sacrificed truth and reason to embrace the party cause; it would be a poor lawyer today who could not now win a libel judgment against the best of these papers, even under the Sullivan restrictions.

It seems unlikely that the age of television will bring us live coverage of Vice President George Bush and Senator Joseph Biden trading lead along the Potomac at dawn, or even hourlong scenes of disorder, such as distinguished the Senate when Jefferson lived and James Monroe occupied the White House. Nor is there any reason to fear that TV by itself will advance demagogues to the highest offices in the land. In fact, American television’s first large-scale foray into public events, the broadcast of the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954, contributed to the downfall

of the junior Senator from Wisconsin, just as the televised Watergate hearings hastened the fall of Richard Nixon. Nixon himself, neither cool, passionate or attractive, gives the lie not only to the Proxmire view of television, but to all others as well. How can such a man remain electable if the influence of TV is what its critics claim? Meanwhile, in the supposedly reasonable age of print, Andrew Jackson, who was widely regarded as a demagogue, managed to win the presidency making use of those organs of reason, the press and the speaker’s platform. If we get demagogues in the age of television, who is to say television is to blame?

The majority that defeated Senator Proxmire’s view of television displayed its own kind of foolishness. Senator Wendell Ford of Kentucky spoke of television coverage as a “useful and constructive extension of democracy in action” and envisioned an electronic future in which people would visit the Senate “sitting in their living rooms.” The picture of the typical American family primly arrayed in front of the Magnavox, hanging on the orations of the Senate, is grim in the docility it attributes to the electorate and laughable to anyone acquainted with the national etiquette of television viewing. In scenarios like Senator Ford’s, TV will usher in an age of Athenian democracy, in which the assembly convenes in every living room, except that the people visit without participating in the debate.

The assumptions supporting this notion of television’s role are as invalid as those underlying Senator Proxmire’s. In 1828 when Mrs. Trollope visited Cincinnati, whose streets then teemed with hogs, she was vexed by the milkman who usurped her mornings explaining the superiority of the American to the British system of government. Mrs. Trollope observed that he and his fellow Ohioans spent their days in the liquor store discussing politics, while their fences needed mending. To this the milkman replied, “I’d rather have my son drunk three times in a week than not to look after the affairs of his country.” It is improbable that the age of television can rival the dedication of our forebears in their pursuit of informed democratic participation, nor is there good reason to suppose that television, even if it informed the electorate better, would

Robert Pattison is the author of On Literacy and the forthcoming, The Triumph of Vulgarly (Oxford University Press).

thereby make our judgments more sober than our ancestors'.

The point is that television is not a force for or against reason or democracy. It does not promote the demagogue any more than it enlightens the citizen. Nor does it seem probable that television favors one kind of public presence over others, as media experts assert. We are told that TV favors a cool, young, open personality, someone who speaks succinctly in a broad, Middle American accent and wears a blue shirt and red tie under a conservative, solid-colored suit. Next to such an image, a wrinkled geezer dressed in rumpled seersucker who rambles on with cornball anecdotes has no chance. But if this is so, why was Sam Ervin so much more successful a television presence during the Watergate hearings than John Dean? Television's reputation for rewarding a pretty face is much exaggerated, and here as elsewhere the easy maxims of the media experts are invalidated by experience.

Most of what passes for television criticism is in fact sociology by other means. Whether TV promotes violence or pornography is not a subject for commentary about television, but a question about trends in society whose causes are not immediately connected with TV, however vividly television may provide evidence of their existence. Television could broadcast *Mary Poppins* twenty-four hours a day or saturate the airwaves with the ballets of Petipa. What its critics would have to demonstrate, to make a genuine contribution to the study of television, is that the medium invariably acts on the individual's psyche or on society in certain predictable ways, no matter what it airs. If McLuhan was sometimes silly, he was right to concentrate on what television is, not on what it broadcasts.

A political analyst writing recently for *TV Guide*, declares that "good debating style demands long statements and vivid descriptions. Good television demands succinct and pithy comments, preferably in fifteen-second chunks, or 'sound bites,' as they are called." This is not a comment about television itself, but about the capitalist structure of the media, which places a premium on network news time; it might also be a comment about the linguistic expectations of the American public, which may prefer its political wisdom distilled into epigrams. Long before television, Americans remembered Patrick Henry or William Jennings Bryan for their fifteen-

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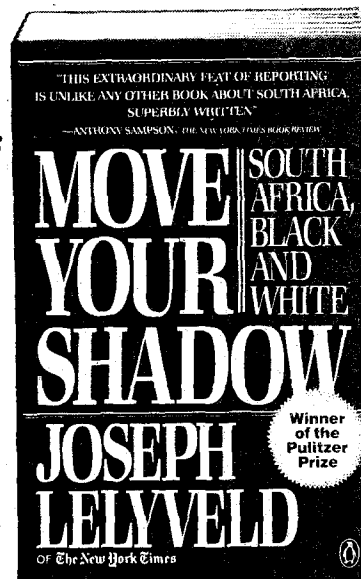
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second bites, not their marathon orations, and one of the virtues that sustains the Gettysburg Address in the American consciousness is a brevity which would now assure replay in its entirety on the evening news. Concision as a virtue of American oratory precedes television.

Television itself, purely as a technology, places no restrictions on rhetoric. It blithely accommodates five-hour harangues by President Fidel Castro or ten-second bites by Senator Robert Dole. Anyone who has read American newspapers (other than the handful of major city dailies that excerpt extended portions of political speechifying) knows that the bias toward brief and distorted quotation is reflected in print every bit as much as in the electronic media.

The soundest generalizations about television are not prescriptive. Just as the invention of television depended on a thousand interrelated ideas and technologies, so television is not by itself a single cause leading to discrete effects.

The influence of television is so inextricably mingled with our history and our culture that no valid conclusion can be drawn that says, "Since television, therefore such-and-such." Senator Proxmire himself recognized this when he observed that in totalitarian societies television is a dreary instrument of the state while in our society it is the icon of capital.

The absence of simple laws governing the influence of television, coupled with the medium's absolute indifference to what it broadcasts, frightens its critics. The influence of television can be almost anything we make of it, and this freedom alarms those, like politicians and social scientists, who desire a predictable universe. If television is a boob tube, if its horizons demarcate a vast wasteland, if its political creatures are demagogues, these are only the shadows of our own disabled imagination presented to ourselves by ourselves. Television is the great instrument of projection. The usual error in criticism of it lies in imagining that this projection works only one way. As in Senator Ford's picture of an inert American public, television is supposed to project on its audience an image of reality that shapes the public mind. But it is just as true that the public mind projects itself on the screen's images, sorting and shaping them into genres whose existence is independent of television. Television's alarming power lies in this double projection, which makes the TV screen a *tabula rasa* for the imaginative machinations not only of the broadcaster, but of the viewer as well. What may result when the projections of the producer and the consumer merge is highly unpredictable.

To accommodate television, the Senate has made several changes in its procedures and is contemplating many more. Special Orders, the mid-morning speeches senators deliver to an empty chamber in order to court voters back home, have been limited to five minutes, rather than the fifteen allowed under the old rules, a change made necessary because the number of Special Orders increased 250 percent over the last year, as senators lined up to declaim for the cameras. This fiasco is only possible because the Senate's new rules strictly control all camera angles. If shots of the whole chamber were permitted, Special Orders would cease as soon as the charade was exposed, and everyone would profit: voters would not be duped, senators would not waste their time and the government would

not spend money on the production of a farce. But the senators are driven by the maxim of the media experts: he who controls the image controls reality. This notion is a half-truth that ignores the projection of the audience's will on the TV image. It is likely that the audience for Special Orders will project its own unfavorable interpretation on these recitations, no matter what safeguards the Senate employs.

With the introduction of the new technology, senators have also proposed that the Senate chamber be repainted; that its drapes be replaced by more photogenic fabrics; that members give their speeches standing rigidly at a lectern ("a roaming speaker will draw attention to empty seats"); that staff members be excluded from the chamber to prevent televised displays of political jobbery; and that senators learn not to gossip and fidget on the air. Most incredible, several senators have proposed that the presiding officer's desk be equipped with a red light to warn him or her ten seconds before a camera shot, and that the presiding officer be wired for an audio-link with the parliamentarian, who would then be cast as director of the Senate as TV show, instructing the chamber on how to respond to each new camera angle.

The majority leader has wisely opposed these last two suggestions. Should they be adopted, the parliamentarian would become the chief officer of the Senate. But the proposals serve to show how far people will go in crippling themselves to cater not to a fact but to a perception. In this case, the Senate prepares to surrender its sovereignty to a notion of television begotten of its own imagination. Television is certainly able to show the Senate as it really is, and the public is probably able to accept this new genre of programming without cashing in its representatives when they roam or doze or chat or miss a beat. But the senators wish to project on the screen not their usual business, but the image of their business they believe the public demands of them. No doubt they believe they are obeying the laws of an electronic age, when in fact they do no more than conform to a limited conception of an otherwise unobjectionable medium.

Television is the most adaptable and neutral of the media. Precisely because of the ease with which it accepts the influence of the imagination, it is the image of our self-imposed distortions. TV is the modern *speculum stultorum*, and

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with some justice it has been named the idiot box. But the mirror itself is harmless, perhaps even virtuous, though the creatures it displays may be fools. Senator Proxmire is right after all. Any medium that shows us not reality but our projection of reality must appear to us as a revolutionary technology, "the Che Guevara of modern society." □

FILMS.

TERRENCE RAFFERTY

Blue Velvet

When David Lynch, the director of *Eraserhead*, *The Elephant Man*, *Dune* and the new *Blue Velvet*, wants to share his bad dreams with us, he doesn't fool around. *Blue Velvet* is horrifying in ways that genre horror movies never are. If in an ordinary movie, a gunk-spewing alien or a masked slasher appears on the screen, we know how to distance ourselves from our fears—by hiding our eyes, or clutching a companion's arm, or simply giggling at the conventions. None of those responses, though, protect us from the unease that images like these produce: a man having a seizure as he waters the lawn on a sunny day, the green hose gnarling around a branch just before he falls; a bruised, naked woman stumbling out of the suburban darkness to embrace the teen-age hero, as his demure girlfriend looks on; Dennis Hopper, as an obscene, bug-eyed sadist, planting a messy kiss on the boy's lips and then reciting, in a sinister whisper, the words of the Roy Orbison song that goes, "In dreams, you are mine—all of the time." This is real nightmare stuff, inexplicable and thus inescapable: we don't know where it's coming from, so we don't know which way to run.

The small logging town of Lumberton, where *Blue Velvet* is set, is a bland American community, as ominous as only places that consider themselves truly safe can be. The streets are so nearly silent that no one notices the persistent, enveloping resonance, the echo, perhaps, of buzzing chainsaws; and because there's no need for much lighting, and the trees are healthy and full, Lumberton by night is voluptuously shadowed, its sidewalks, overhung with branches, like tunnels into a sensuous

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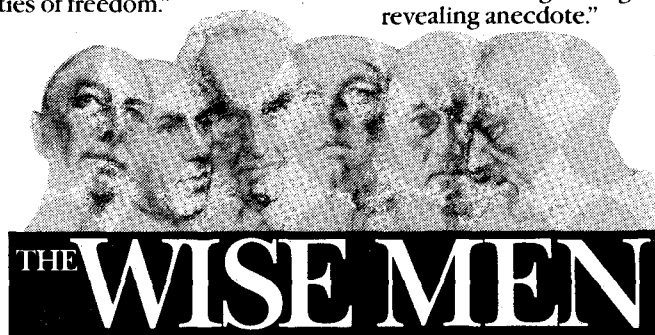
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dark. Every image and every sound in *Blue Velvet* tells us that the ordinary is teeming with unspeakable, innumerable dangers—and some viewers will probably decide, halfway through, that the only safe place is outside the theater altogether, far, far away from the hellish Our Town that David Lynch calls home.

Part, but not all, of what makes *Blue Velvet* so unsettling is that Lynch's nightmare has a sort of irregular, homemade quality, as if it had been cooked up with familiar but not entirely wholesome ingredients—a fresh apple pie with a couple of worms poking through the crust. Lynch tells his story in the form of a boy's detective novel, the kind of tale in which an earnest young fellow happens on a mystery and resolves, on his own, to "get to the bottom of it": in its blunt expository scenes, *Blue Velvet* has the gee-whiz tone of young-adult thrillers, but the bottom of this mystery is *really* the bottom, a long, steep fall away. Lynch's hero, 19-year-old Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan), gets involved in his adventure when he finds a severed human ear in a vacant lot; the police, for some reason, figure that this discovery has something to do with a nightclub singer named Dorothy Valens (Isabella Rossellini), and Jeffrey wants to know more. While she sings "Blue Velvet" under a ghastly blue spotlight in a Lumberton dive called The Slow Club, he hides in a closet in her apartment, then spies on her through the louvered door when she comes home. It's a kinky stakeout, disturbingly intimate from the moment she walks in the door: Jeffrey's gaze, and the camera, remain fixed on her as she rips off her wig, strips to black bra and panties, and walks wearily down the long, murky corridor to her bright bathroom.

This hush sequence has a powerful grip: by this point, Jeffrey's boy-sleuth curiosity has turned into a more intense form of scrutiny, an eroticized alertness to sensual detail. Once Lynch has us watching this way with Jeffrey, really appalling things start to happen, and images seem to enter our minds in a liquid, dreamlike slow motion, one drop of perception at a time, till we're saturated, dazed with experience. What Jeffrey sees from here on is a lurid vision of the adult world, all corruption and cruelty and brutal, scary sex, magnified and made vivid by the shock to

his innocence, but a little blurred, too. This stuff is coming at him (and us) out of the blue; and without a context, some link to convention or ordinary experience, nothing can be absolutely clear. When Jeffrey, still lurking in Dorothy's closet, watches her being abused, verbally and physically, by a deranged gangster named Frank (Hopper), the sick little scene is indelible because what Lynch makes us privy to is both too much and not enough. The ugly emotions of the scene come through with overwhelming force, yet we're not quite sure what's at stake in Frank and Dorothy's relationship, and the visual style keeps us off base. From his vantage behind the slats, Jeffrey is right on top of the grotesque couple, but Lynch uses a distorting lens that makes them look farther away and slightly foreshortened—mean and pathetic figures. The lighting and décor are just as disorienting: both Frank and Dorothy have luminously pale flesh, bathed in harsh fluorescence, but neither their clothing nor the apartment's low-to-the-ground, mud-colored 1950s furniture seems to take the light at all. Everything is clear—punishingly direct—yet all the while we're straining to see more.

In passages like these, Lynch achieves a kind of radiant seediness. The drama that's played out before Jeffrey's innocent, greedy eyes, is all the more riveting for being a bit tacky: Lynch has even borrowed, artfully, the look of late fifties nudie movies, with their variable lighting, their peekaboo camera placements, their arsenal of low techniques that keep us gazing avidly, neither sated nor frustrated. *Blue Velvet* is all revealing and concealing, its shutters opening and closing so rapidly we're driven half-mad with excitement. That is to say, it's a real movie, the first one in a long time that turns the viewer's passivity into furious cognitive activity. Every image, even those that seem most shockingly new, teases us with a hint of familiarity, a glimpse of some frayed connection to home. Just as every dream has a thread of reality—corrupted but recognizable bits of remembered life—that keeps us believing in it, *Blue Velvet* maintains a constant, tantalizing hum in the background, a subliminal music like pop melodies dimly recalled. If Lynch's mystery has a key, it's the song "Blue Velvet" itself, or rather the kind of song it is: a trashy romantic ballad that can insinuate itself into the mind and get tangled with deeper, more potent im-

pressions. What we hear in the background of *Blue Velvet*, what we struggle to identify, is Lynch's own warped oldies album of innocence and experience.

Even the roughest, potentially most alienating elements of *Blue Velvet*—the abrupt shifts of tone, the awkward dialogue, the primitive, almost childlike elisions in plot and character development—work for Lynch here, as they didn't in the failed science-fiction spectacle of *Dune*, because they're all his: his dream associations, picked up from the flotsam of 1950s and 1960s pop culture, and carried along on a relentless undertow of obsession, a somnambulist's rhythm. *Eraserhead*, which was also based on an original script by Lynch (and which also had Frederick Elmes as its cinematographer), had a similar pull, but even that movie, more overtly hallucinatory, was less disturbing than this. It was a midnight movie in more ways than one—so claustrophobic, so unmistakably interior, so dark that it could only have taken place in the small hours of the morning. The more expansive *Blue Velvet*, alternating the 1950s and the 1980s, bland sunlight and rich obscurity, teen-age innocence and ripe adult corruption, is practically a new genre: the demented matinee.

One measure of how seductive this particular nightmare is is the astonishing quality of the performances. Actors in dream-movies often have a glazed, puppetlike demeanor. (The most extreme example is Werner Herzog's *Heart of Glass*, in which the performers reportedly played their scenes under hypnosis; the most effective use is probably in Buñuel's *Belle de Jour*, where Catherine Deneuve's beauty is as icily perfect as a doll's.) Lynch's actors are not only brilliantly cast—they actually behave as if they're tuned in to the director's bizarre frequency. Rossellini, her face a battered memory of her mother, Ingrid Bergman, is exotic and vulnerable; MacLachlan, who looks a lot like Lynch himself, manages a very tricky mixture of Boy Scout rectitude and teen-age prurience; Laura Dern, an all-American girl, gives a delicate, ironic twist to her most naïvely idealistic sentiments, and turns her pleasant face into a rubbery, poetic cartoon of grief when she's confronted with the world's ugliness; and Hopper and Dean Stockwell, the two most alarming of the movie's villains, are sensationally evil, a pair of 1950s child stars gone to seed, whose faces are like maps of three decades'

pop-culture insanities. This disparate crew have all found their way into Lynch's intensely imagined American landscape. There's no point in denying that in some corner of our minds—next to the jukebox, maybe—this is our hometown, too. □

ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

David Sawin

I somewhere read of a bird genetically so endowed that it makes a run for a dark place immediately upon pecking through its egg. The disposition to make that initial desperate run, upon which its survival depends, is transient: it gets just one shot, and if something intervenes—an ethological kibbitzer, say—the bird never again follows its instinctual vector and must wander, unfulfilled and confused, until its early demise. I am unable to discuss this example with ornithological detail or certitude, but it has become for me a metaphor of the condition of the artist in our time. Pipping its way through the shell of its art school, the fledgling artist makes its run for New York, and if for some reason it fails in its institutionally programmed drive for survival, it ekes out a wilderness existence in cruel oblivion.

The art historian Thomas Crowe, who taught for a time at a West Coast art school, once narrated, with resigned amazement, the amount of art-world knowledge the students there acquire for their New York dash. They know precisely where to go and what to do and are wired up to paint for success. Once here they turn out the standard glamorous paintings or sculptures or performances works the market demands, and even turn up at such shows as the Whitney Biennial, which are devoted to works that are themselves devoted to being included in just such exhibitions. Thus an artist in his mid-20s, whom I shall not name, having made the run successfully from California to the East Village, and having been shown, to critical excitement, in Europe and Japan as well as here, is just now having his fifth show, this time at an important gallery in SoHo. His works, which are of a transcendental scruffiness, demonstrate how to be success-

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ful though vapid, cynical, simple and immense. His are, in effect, the salon paintings of our time. Like salon paintings always, there would be little reason to execute them were it not for the patronage and preferment that come with the format the artist has found.

It is not only the newly hatched M.F.A.s who languish if they do not make the fateful run, though the art world has so evolved that it is they who are expected, wave upon annual wave, to bring the revolution that the economics of the art market requires in order to advance the hoopla of the Historical New and Important. Older artists, in looser art worlds, art worlds in which collector, curator, dealer, even critic and artist, were less interlocked in a common merchandising effort, may even so have missed a critical moment, only to idle in bitter neglect. Lawrence Weschler recently wrote about Harold Shapinsky, who by rights ought to have risen to eminence with his fellow Abstract Expressionists but, since he was elsewhere when it was necessary to be here, was condemned to total obscurity. When, recently, he was rescued in one of the most romantic chapters in the history of recognition, no fewer than thirty major New York dealers saw no reason to look at his slides. (He has yet to have a New York showing despite considerable success in Europe.) Shapinsky is a special case, since he persisted in painting in the original idiom of Abstract Expressionism long past the time when it was historically relevant to do so, and so remains today a kind of magnificent fossil. In this sense he differs from David Sawin, who followed, to similar unrecognition, a path tangential to recent art history, and did not participate in some larger movement, being, in a way, a movement unto himself. Shapinsky faltered because the movement he was part of entered history without him, Sawin because he entered history without being part of a movement.

Both artists would be natural candidates for an award set up earlier this year by the Francis J. Greenburger Foundation, which specifically sought to identify artists whose achievement was inversely proportional to their recognition. Five judges—Robert Motherwell, Thomas Messer and Clement Greenberg included—were to single out one artist each for celebration. The artists received checks, were included in a group show in a prominent midtown gallery and honored at a reception at the Guggenheim Museum, which was written up in the form of a giggle in the Talk of the Town section of *The New Yorker*. The art world was hostile to the project, largely, I believe, because the effort challenged the premises on which the purveying of art is grounded. It was, according to Arnold Glimcher of the Pace Gallery, "a very naïve idea." His claim, which I shall label "Glimcher's Theorem," is that there are no unrecognized artists. The proof went something as follows: "If the work is powerful, it announces itself. It's very hard to conceal something of great quality." Perhaps this is true if the work is shown, but how is it to announce itself from the unvisited studio? It is not as though a holy star appears in the East over Brooklyn, and some trio of art world magi—Saatchi, Saatchi and Boone—ride forth in adoration. If the Glimchers will not look, how is anyone to see? "As far as young artists that are good," he went on, coming to the point, "the media and the collectors are in the artists' studios when they are still in kindergarten."

"I am really most interested in the young," a woman of great sensibility and some weight in the museum world once murmured, articulating the historical thesis that the viable artist is either already established or a young running bird of the next revolution. But in truth the great artistic revolutions that define the monumental past for the New York art world were made by artists in their middle years who had internalized the dynamics of art history and broken through into regions of expression so unanticipated that the vivid question for them was whether what they had done was even art. They did know that if it was art, then art had to be redefined in a radical way. In those great artists, the historical transformations in art coincided with their own internal growth as artists, and it is always instructive to witness, in retrospect, the relationship between their early explorations and the immense liberations that followed, explosively, as history achieved itself through them. There is no room in the art world today, structured as it is, for that sort of growth. There is no room for the deepening awareness, for the painfully awakened secrets in the soul of a person's art, for the despairs, the heavy sense of one's own limits, for the redeeming moment of breakthrough and transfiguration, in that intimate and

mutual communication between artist and work that resembles a long, difficult and rewarding relationship. Today there is only the fret about finding the right gallery, the right collector, getting good reviews, hitting the right formula, making it.

I have seen two classes of unsuccessful artist, each tragic in a different way. The first group takes as authoritative the salon style of the moment as that is transmitted through the art magazines, much as the latest fashions are carried by *Vogue* or *Elle*. Using these patterns, the artists irrelevantly re-enact East Village fashions in provincial ateliers. It is impossible to visit art shows in outlying areas without encountering iterations of last season's work, as though they were the ready-to-wear line of a successful designer. If the artist is at all gifted, the ready-to-wear art she or he puts on fits ill and looks makeshift, and the tragedy is a function of the distance between the artistic personality and the sad work hopelessly turned out. The other class—much smaller—is composed of men and women who labor only for the internal reward, and for the appreciation of those few who happen to notice. Their art worlds have a negligible circumference and consist of persons who not only know the artist personally but are likely to know one another as well. Recognition begins when one's work gets known by people one does not know oneself. But inasmuch as Glimcher's theorem pretty much defines the attitude of the official art world today—if you are not known you are not—it is impossible for such recognition to begin. At least this form of tragedy leaves artistic dignity intact. For these artists it is possible to be, paradoxical as this must sound next to Glimcher's logic, at once unknown and marvelous, at once ignored and deep.

David Sawin, an artist I admire without reservation, has been unable to exhibit except obscurely for the past twenty-five years. Neither established nor in kindergarten, his work is officially nonexistent. It is nonetheless work of the purest and most profound order, and I am grateful that it is being shown at the affectingly old-fashioned Waverley Gallery, at 103 Waverly Place, from October 2 to 24. There are eighteen recent paintings, most of them small—most of them invisibly small by comparison with the large-scale blasts of today's salon pieces. They use the classical format of still life and land-

scape, but as occasions rather than subjects, for this artist is concerned with transitions and tensions: like Matisse, he is interested not in the objects themselves but in the relationships between them. Like Henry James (if a literary analog is licit) whose concern was with characters mainly as points of perturbation in a social field, objects, for Sawin, are there for the purpose of making palpable the forces that define a world of paint. In James, one single word can transform the social field cataclysmical-

ly, precipitating the tensions it was the mark of his mastery to reveal. For Sawin, a single splash of color has just that effect. It is exceedingly difficult for readers to make the transition from Zap Comix to *The Golden Bowl*. The transition from Whitney Biennial art to Sawin's work is difficult in just that way.

The best of his paintings are ambiguous between landscape and still life, and hence between abstraction and representation. But even when these identities are clear, there will be ambiguities



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of form and space: a certain shape may be a hill, sloped in Euclidean space, or a meadow tipped up in Cubist space. A line may mark a path through one expanse, or the boundary of another. The indeterminacies are not, I think, what the paintings themselves are about, but consequences of how the objects are addressed. The drama of the work is located where objects impinge upon one another's spaces—I have seen paintings of his in which the objects appear to vie for space, and where the pressures they exert on one another simply distort the space into something that cannot be represented in Euclidean terms. Sawin treats boundaries as the locus of tensions so extreme that they induce vibrations all across the visual field. So the objects—apples, dishes, bottles, if still lifes; meadows, trees, suns, if landscapes—are not located in space but create spaces of a kind possible only in paintings: they serve, one might say, as condensations of space, regarded as an almost viscous medium. So the landscapes are not scenes, as it were, that could be painted *en plein air*, the still lifes are not arrangements of objects in the studio. One gets the sense, rather, that a few lines must be set down on the canvas, a few swipes of paint, and then some complex adjustments and transitions are enacted—and a landscape or a still life is what results. And because of the way form requires form, color demands color, the result is a triumph of resolution, even if the apples or trees are somewhat the worse for wear. Their role is simply to serve as a focus for the decisions as to touch and pigment of which the work consists.

These are extremely beautiful paintings, and the beauty is enhanced by the compressions induced by their small sizes. It is as though the scale exerts a pressure on the forms and colors, raising them to a luminosity stained glass might attain if it were capable of being executed with great subtlety, in tones of green and blue and orange that penetrate one another in such a way that the orange would not be that orange without the cool scrub of green, the green not that very green without the blues and whites and ochres that keep it in place. The paint has the variousness and energy of life. The tonalities, the way the paint adheres to the surface, are almost in a tradition of nineteenth-century American landscape—I think of Inness. But it would have to be an Inness who had studied Cézanne and

Morandi, and had forsaken, as it was difficult for Inness to do, sentimentality and ulterior feelings. There is, in each of Sawin's paintings, a mood that suffuses it as a whole. But these are not the identifiable moods that partially define the tradition of the sentimental landscape. Sawin draws on so much of modern art—he would be impossible without the strategies and problems modern art made central—but I know of no artist with whom he can be interestingly compared. His is the kind of vision neglect and resolution make possible. He is very much a loner.

I have known David Sawin for many years, and had I not known him personally, there would have been no way to know his art. But those who love painting are so certain to derive pleasure from the sustained contemplation each work demands that I feel justified in devoting this column to his work, even though I have also used the occasion to reflect on the cost not only the artist but those devoted to art are obliged to pay for an art world driven by the terrible engines of promotion, manipulation and exploitation. □

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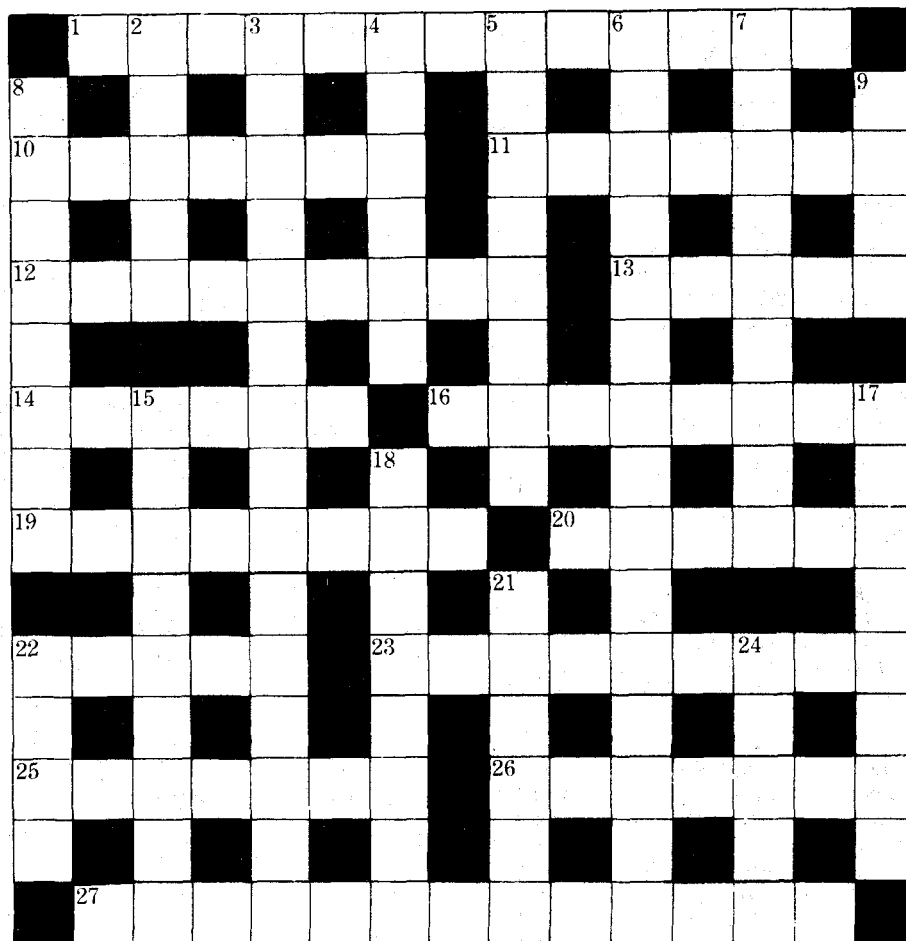
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G	O	B	B	L	E	D	D	E	W	D	R	O	P
H	B	E	O	I	L	E	S						
T	H	E	P	E	A	K	E	D	I	D	L	E	
	R	H	K	S	C	O	C						
R	E	S	T	O	R	E	S	M	O	U	S	E	R
E		N	N	U	N								
B	U	C	K	E	T	O	N	E	S	P	O	S	T
E	L	S	D	I	I	R							
L	A	I	D	S	E	R	V	E	D	I	C	E	
L	P	F	S	E	E	G	A						
I	M	P	U	L	S	E	R	E	R	E	A	D	S
O	E	O	R	S	E	M	E						
N	U	R	S	E	T	R	E	A	D	M	I	L	L



Crossword Puzzle No. 2121

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

- 1 See 27
- 10 Passed during the laps Edward made. (7)
- 11 It's not easy to see such things, having lost blood, when one hears you take the railroad to heart. (7)
- 12 Certainly not first-class food if you pay this for travel! (5,4)
- 13 Mark this as being responsible for the character of a well-known boy—or two! (5)
- 14 One might take a bow, being more coy. (5)
- 16 Did a nose which has to be cleared up have trouble with them? (8)
- 19 One can't say one doesn't give a damn if one is caught so. (8)
- 20 A tattered garment on one possibly associated with Catherine. (6)
- 22 Bear with such a family? (Not the best type of picture to destroy!) (5)
- 23 How one might find oneself at the end of flight—but not in time, perhaps. (3,2,4)
- 25 Such stuff as imaginative dreams are made of, sometimes? (4,3)
- 26 Rank display here, perhaps! (7)
- 27 and 1 Three basketball teams might be responsible for something other than a live press on some body! (7,3,2,1,4,4,5)

DOWN

- 2 Senora Peron of the French? Some do it to issue. (5)
- 3 You won't continue to see stage assistants in such a production! (12,3)

- 4 Mountainous, in a sense—presenting an article to the college official. (6)
- 5 A chord sometimes does, but mistakenly transmits something around it. (8)
- 6 The air is ghastly, but it probably won't be easily forgotten. (8,7)
- 7 Coming up for air, does it mean putting on a coat? (That's what the beach boys do, giving very fast service.) (9)
- 8 Might one have heard they were comers, if revolutionary? (8)
- 9 A nest of thieves, as they say, in Arabia. (4)
- 15 Find a little heavenly body in one, according to the composer. (9)
- 17 Not exactly freckles—probably much larger, with places for the main stars. (8)
- 18 Where one might find the golf nut, according to schedule. (2,6)
- 21 Brook's master disguise. (6)
- 22 What one does at the plate is sometimes crazy! (4)
- 24 In the capital, one might see the grasping type. (5)

PUZZLED?

No more cross words. Find out why "little skipper" is a "truant." Send for a free copy of Frank W. Lewis's Ground Rules to *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.



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